

Media, PA — Congressman Joe Sestak today spoke at the dedication of the New Learning Center at Williamson Free School, emphasizing the importance of vocational training in workforce development.

“The words of Isaiah Williamson ring as true today as they did almost 120 years ago. He said, ‘In this country every able-bodied healthy young man who has learned a good mechanical trade, and is truthful, honest, frugal, temperate, and industrious, is certain to succeed in life, and to become a useful and respected member of society,’” quoted the Congressman. “This new learning center will be an important part of keeping that statement true in future years.”

The newly completed Walter M. Strine Sr. Learning Center will hold the majority of classes and house non-trade faculty, as well as a library, computer lab, and faculty lounge.

“Delaware County began with agriculture, but its greatest growth was due to manufacturing and artisan skills. They are what made Delaware County great and what this school is about,” said Congressman Sestak. “Even today, the artisan skills require higher levels of science and math as manufacturing becomes more sophisticated and high-tech. I personally learned the value of technical skills during my first job as a fire marshal in the Navy, overseeing welders, mechanics, and electricians.”

Congressman Sestak emphasized in his remarks the tremendous impact that trade and vocational schools have had in the development of America, relaying that senior Chinese leaders have said that what they most admire are not Yale or Harvard universities, but the trade, technical, and community colleges that produced the tradesmen and artisans that made America a great manufacturing power.

“But there are many challenges facing us. Recent years have seen a dramatic shift in our regional economy,” said Congressman Sestak. “In the past six years, 607 small businesses, and one out of every five manufacturing establishments, have been lost locally. The skills you develop at Williamson in this wonderful facility will prime you to not only weather a challenging economy, but to thrive and hopefully start successful businesses of your own.

“It is places like Williamson,” the Congressman continued, “that provide the workforce to retain and attract new high-value industries. And Williamson does more than train workers; it teaches its students the values of character, honor and integrity. It is as the Greeks said, ‘it is the use of all your faculties to attain excellence that is truly the enjoyment of life,’ and there is great enjoyment at Williamson because they teach you to use all your qualities to attain excellence.”

Congressman Sestak has also recently held two Economic Summits to assist businesses in the district to address the issues of jobs, businesses, and a highly trained workforce. The first Economic Development Summit brought together several hundred stakeholders from across the District to participate in discussions to address the key issues facing workforce development, access to capital, business development and growth, community economic development, and economic development strategies. The second summit focused on encouraging economic

development by connecting local businesses with federal, state, and local resources and programs.

"I believe strongly that education and economic growth go hand in hand," said Congressman Sestak. "We must ensure that our schools are training workers for an ever evolving economy. That is why I invited Dr. Reid, the President of the Williamson School, to share his work on advanced training at Williamson during a higher education summit I recently held."

The Congressman commended Mr. Strine for great dedication to the school and the contribution that made the new facility possible. He also complimented Dr. Reid for running a school of such excellence and vowed to be a part of enhancing artisan skills in the county.

In Congress, Congressman Sestak is a member of the Education and Labor Committee, where he has advocated for education and training programs for all, including vocational and advanced training programs. He has held three education summits, covering early childhood education, the No Child Left Behind law, and higher education and advanced training.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives.

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